

Education Cabinet

Kentucky public libraries rank as most highly regarded local government service in new state survey

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FRANKFORT, Ky. – Kentucky public libraries are the most highly regarded local government service, according to a recent independent survey of Kentuckians.

In addition, more than 95 percent of Kentuckians surveyed agree that public libraries are a good investment of tax dollars.

A survey of 600 Kentuckians by the University of Kentucky Survey Research Center sponsored by the Kentucky Public Library Association indicates that Kentuckians place a high value on local public libraries. The telephone survey conducted Sept. 6 – Oct. 13 represents citizens from every county.

The research shows that nine out of 10 people view Kentucky's public libraries as a key educational asset in the community, while more than eight out of 10 agree that public libraries improve communities.

Among six services provided by local government, Kentucky's public libraries rank at the top with nearly 86 percent giving public libraries an A or B grade when asked to rate the quality of libraries' services. The second highest ranking is police services at 75 percent.

Kentucky General Assembly Public Library Caucus Co-chairs Reps. Bob Damron and Bob M. DeWeese, M.D., said they were very pleased with the community support for public libraries. The

bipartisan caucus for members of the Kentucky House of Representatives supports public libraries through state initiatives.

"Libraries have always been the center of community learning for all ages," Damron said. "If Kentucky is going to continue progressing economically, we need to be a community of life-long learners, and libraries are critical to that vision. We've got to double our efforts to finance our libraries under an increasingly difficult budget situation so that we can maintain the progress we have made."

DeWeese said, "I am very pleased that such a large majority of citizens across the state use and appreciate the public library system and the opportunities it provides. Our libraries are woven in the very fabric of our society, providing learning and enjoyment and defining the richness of our communities. I am most supportive of our public libraries and will continue to work with the general assembly and budget offices in support of increased state general budget funding to keep our libraries strong."

Currently more than 2 million Kentuckians have public library cards, according to Wayne Onkst, state librarian and commissioner of the Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives (KDLA). Kentucky has 116 public libraries serving 118 counties.

In FY 2006, more than 16.7 million visits were made to Kentucky's local libraries, and more than 1 million children participated in children's programs.

Onkst said, "Community libraries serve people of all ages in a safe, friendly environment. They introduce preschoolers to reading, provide materials on parenting skills, assist school-age students with homework, help individuals prepare for the GED, provide equipment and assistance for job seekers, provide Talking Books for the visually impaired and elderly and serve as community centers."

Community libraries also provide computer access, free Internet service and computer training to citizens across the commonwealth. During fiscal year 2006, more than 31,500 people received computer training in the state's public libraries. The survey shows that if more funds were available for public libraries, about one in

three Kentuckians would like to see more computers made available for users.

"I think people would be amazed to know that in fiscal year 2006, nine times as many people entered Kentucky public libraries as attended men's and women's basketball and football games at the University of Kentucky, University of Louisville, Kentucky State University, Eastern Kentucky University, Western Kentucky University and Morehead State University combined," Onkst said.

Public Library Caucus members

Co-chairs - Rep. Bob DeWeese, Jefferson County; and Rep. Bob Damron, Fayette and Jessamine counties
Rep. Royce Adams, Gallatin, Grant and Owen counties
Rep. Mike Cherry, Caldwell, Crittenden, Livingston and McCracken counties
Rep. Jim DeCesare, Warren County
Rep. Teddy Edmonds, Breathitt, Estill and Lee counties
Rep. Jeff Hoover, Clinton, Pulaski and Russell counties
Rep. Dennis Keene, Campbell County
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Rep. Tanya Pullin, Boyd and Greenup counties
Rep. Marie Rader, Jackson, Laurel and Owsley counties
Rep. Rick Rand, Carroll, Henry, Oldham and Trimble counties
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Rep. Steve Riggs, Jefferson County
Rep. Sal Santoro, Boone County
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Rep. Ken Upchurch, McCreary, Pulaski and Wayne counties
Rep. Robin Webb, Carter and Lewis counties
Rep. Susan Westrom, Fayette County
Rep. Addia Wuchner, Boone County

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The Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives provides equitable access to quality library and information resources and services, as well as helps public agencies ensure that legislatively

mandated documentation of government programs is created, efficiently maintained, and made accessible. For more information on KDLA resources, programs and services visit www.kdla.ky.gov or call 502-564-8300, ext. 315.

KDLA is an agency of the Kentucky Education Cabinet which coordinates learning programs from P-16, and manages and supports training and employment functions in the Department for Workforce Investment. For more information on our programs, visit www.educationcabinet.ky.gov, or www.workforce.ky.gov, or call 502-564-6606.